

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 2196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR, EGEN, EAID, ETRD, PFOR, OEXC, BU

SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE: BULGARIAN AGRICULTURALISTS

MOSCOW FOR YALE RICHMOND, CU/EE

1. HAD A LONG DISCUSSION NOV 28 WITH VURBAN DZHAMBOV, DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, ABOUT HIS TRIP TO THE US WITH POPOV IN SEPTEMBER DURING WHICH HE ALSO SEPARATELY VISITED A NUMBER OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT FIRMS, SOME UNIVERSITIES, AND THE FAIR AT FORT DODGE, IOWA. HE SPOKE WARMLY OF RECEPTION OF THE POPOV PARTY BY SECRETARY BUTZ, DETAILED THE PURCHASES MADE FROM VARIOUS AMERICAN EQUIPMENT FIRMS (POWELL, HESSTON, FMC ETC.) AND THEN MADE A REQUEST.

2. DZHAMBOV SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SEND 30 BULGARIAN AGRICULTURAL SPECIALISTS (15 ENGINEERS AND 15 AGRONOMISTS) TO THE US AT BULGARIAN EXPENSE TO WORK ON AMERICAN FARMS DURING AN ENTIRE GROWING CYCLE. THE GOB WOULD PAY TRAVEL EXPENSES AND "POCKET MONEY" BUT THESE MEN WOULD GO TO AMERICAN FARMS AS "WORKERS" AND NOT JUST TO WATCH. "UNLESS THEY ACTUALLY WORK ON THE FARMS THEY WILL NOT REALLY LEARN HOW THINGS ARE DONE IN AMERICAN FARMING", DZHAMBOV SAID.

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3. I TOLD DZHAMBOV THAT REGARDLESS OF WHO PAYS FOR

THESE VISITS, WE WOULD REGARD THE OPERATION AS SOMEWHAT IN THE NATURE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO BULGARIA. SINCE WE HAVE NO PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE TO BULGARIA, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE PART OF EDUCATIONAL INTERCHANGE, HELPING OUR TWO COUNTRIES TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER. THIS, HOWEVER, SHOULD LOGICALLY REQUIRE SOME OPENING-UP AT THIS END FOR SUCH EXCHANGES. DZHAMBOV SAID AMERICAN AGRICULTURISTS WOULD BE MOST WELCOME HERE, BUT I SAID WE ARE THINKING OF EXCHANGES IN BROADER TERMS ALTHOUGH SOME AGRICULTURE SPECIALISTS MIGHT BE SENT AS PART OF PROGRAM.

4. DZHAMBOV SAID ONE PROGRAM OF THE KIND THAT HE OUTLINED IS BEING INITIATED WITH CANADA, THE FIRST GROUP OF BULGARIAN AGRONOMISTS LEAVING IN JANUARY. RETURNING TECHNICIANS COULD NOT HELP BEING "PROPAGANDISTS" FOR AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT WITH WHICH THEY HAD BECOME MOST FAMILIAR. BULGARIA, HAVING ORDERED ONE EACH OF SIZEABLE LINE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY ORDER LARGER QUANTITIES AND MAY ENTER INTO LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRODUCTION HERE. FOR ALL THIS, A BODY OF BULGARIANS WHO HAVE ACTUALLY LIVED WITH AMERICAN MACHINERY AND SEEN HOW AMERICAN FARMERS USE THEM, WOULD BE USEFUL.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT BULGARIA IS SHAPING UP AS A SIZEABLE MARKET FOR AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT, AND SOME CO-PRODUCTION ARRANGEMENTS MAY ALSO EVENTUATE FROM DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY. IN THIS CONTEXT, I THINK DZHAMBOV'S PROPOSAL HAS MERIT AND SHOULD BE FOLLOWED UP, BUT PERHAPS WE SHOULD TRY TO OBTAIN SOMETHING IN RETURN FOR IT IN FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL OR BROADER CULTURAL EXCHANGE. WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS.

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